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STARSCAPE SAYS...

Calling all Starkids!

Thanks and welcome to TALES THAT ASTONISHED.

TTA is basically a trip through some of the best comic stories, along with movies, television and cartoons, especially, but not only, from the UK and US. There is no publishing schedule but expect a new issue around quarterly.

Naturally, I'm interested in what you enjoy and what you don't. Where are we getting it right and what can be improved. And if you've ever fancied getting involved, whether that's in writing articles, compiling news, submitting comics, design or anything else appropriate, just let me know.

Reach me at tta@starscapecomicuk Until then...

Keep watching the stars!

Chris Smillie
(Starchief)

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TALES THAT ASTONISHED

Vol. 1 *No. 2*

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Contents

STARSCAPE SAYS... 3

SHOWCASED 5
The Life of Captain Mar-Vell 5
Plastic Man – the other one? 11

(NOT SO) SECRET ORIGINS 14
AKA Comics..... 14

THE BRAVE & THE BOLD.....20
Captain Atom 20

DEFECTIVE COMICS 24
Marvel(ous) Team-Up..... 24

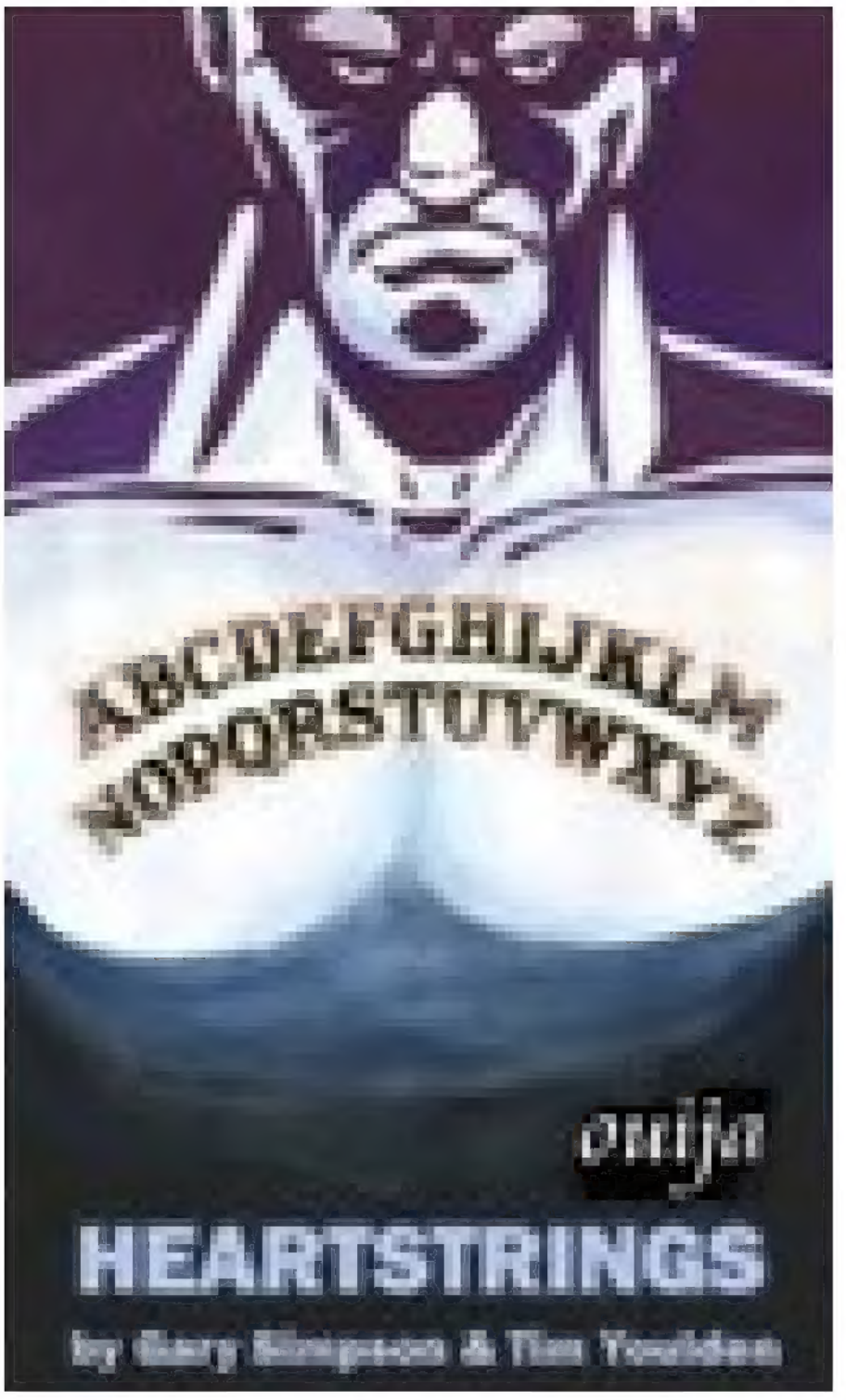
MORE FUN COMICS.....29
Herbie 29

FANTASY MASTERPIECE 34
2000AD: The Robot Wars..... 34

FLICKS THAT TIME FORGOT.....37
Space 1999: Mission of the Darians37

THE GRAVE AND THE OLD 43
Captain America 4..... 43

THIS DAY IN COMICS.....47
May 1982..... 47



Sebastian is able to call forth demons and speak to the dead. Will his desire for vengeance and battle against the supernatural lead to salvation or doom?

SHOWCASED

(supermen remembered)

The Life of Captain Mar-Vell

With one magic word! Nothing would happen. Why? Well, this is a completely different Captain Marvel to his more famous counterpart.

First, a little bit of history…

For those not in the know, the original Captain Marvel first saw light as the lead hero in Whiz Comic. Soon, Fawcett Comics most famous character was the most popular superhero in the whole of comicdom. Yep, that's right, during his heyday in World War 2, CM even outsold Superman….a situation that did not best please National Periodicals – publishers of the Big Blue Boy Scout.

This led to Supes company suing the aforementioned Fawcett Comics over Cap being too similar to Superman. Y'know – Superman being a blue costumed alien whose alter ego is actually a mild-mannered adult, Clark Kent, from a quaint country homestead in Kansas, whilst Cap was really Billy Batson, a young orphan, living on the streets, gifted his powers by a magic wizard – Shazam!

It does not sound overly similar to our comic-cultured ears but then, those were different times. Super-strength, speed, flight and invulnerability is now fairly standard. But, in the early Forties, those were exactly the qualities that set the pre-superhero world alight.

After numerous court battles – all won by Shazam! – eventually Cap was not selling enough for Fawcett to continue the fight. So, the biggest-selling hero of all-time ceased publication.

A number of years after the original Cap finished, a re-invented publisher was setting the world alight in the Sixties. And, given that the name had fallen out of trademark, that company decided that Captain Marvel was the perfect name for the Marvel Comics Group.

This caused a bit of trouble for DC when they bought out Fawcett's Cap and began to display the title as *Shazam! The Original Captain Marvel*. The comics company had them change that to *With One Mighty Word…Shazam!* And so, Marvel continued with their new character.

THE MARVEL COMICS GROUP PRESENTS...
"THE COMING OF CAPTAIN MARVEL!"
PHASE ONE!!
AND SO IT BEGINS...!
THE GREATEST NEW SUPERHERO OF ALL...PRESENTED WITH PARDONABLE PRIDE BY:
STAN LEE and GENE COLAN
EMBELLISHED BY: FRANK GIACOIA
LETTERED BY: ARTIE SIMEK

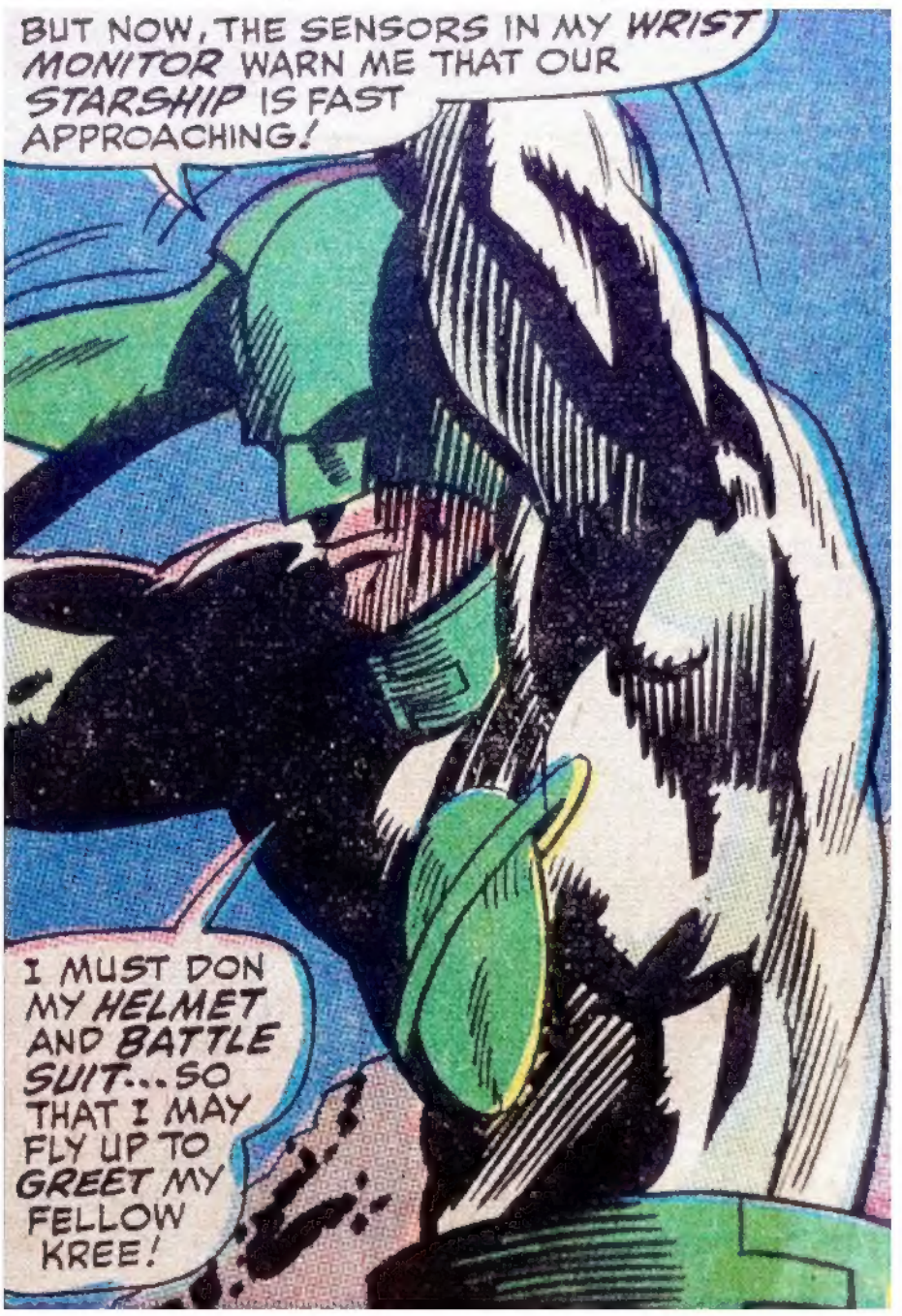
However, this Captain Marvel was no hero…

Sent by the Supreme Intelligence to decide on the threat posed by Planet Earth, Mar-Vell was a Kree captain who would ultimately advise on whether our world will live or die.

We had already briefly met the Kree in the Fantastic Four, where they had battled the Sentry and, a favourite character of mine, Ronan the Accuser.

A warlike advanced race, they were concerned about the defeat of both villains and the visit (and defeat) of their cosmic arch-enemies, the sinister Skrulls.

We had the usual Marvel foibles that made the company so different from the Distinguished Competition. An unhappy but devoted love (Una – a medic on the orbiting space station), an arch-enemy at least as powerful as Cap himself (Yon-Rogg) and a fatal weakness (Mar-Vell could only survive for an hour in Earth's atmosphere without his breathing mask).


BUT NOW, THE SENSORS IN MY WRIST MONITOR WARN ME THAT OUR STARSHIP IS FAST APPROACHING!
I MUST DON MY HELMET AND BATTLE SUIT... SO THAT I MAY FLY UP TO GREET MY FELLOW KREE!

So, yeah, it was Marvel by numbers and yet…it wasn't. There was just something uninspired about it. It was somehow reminiscent of maybe Captain Atom from Charlton Comics Group. He was a little too staid a character. A little too boring. His costume was not one of Marvel's greatest. And the company eventually agreed.

Mar-Vell eventually had his love killed off and his powers upgraded by

the mighty Zo! As well as the usual increased strength (and most of those other things Superman and Shazam! fought over), CM could also create illusions and teleport. Why would Zo grant him those powers?

Dunno.

And Mar-Vell didn't seem to care much either.

Eventually, it was decided that this was just too stupid to continue. It was all a ruse then. A big practical joke by Ronan and Yon-Rogg to…well…whatever.

Let's start again.

Mar-Vell (who is now limited to his military station of captain) was given traditional superhero powers and a new costume (no need for breathing masks and solutions). However, in a brilliant twist, if in a convoluted manner, Cap finds himself intertwined with sidekick to the stars, Rick Jones.

After discovering Nega-Bands (read: magic bracelets), Cap finds that he can swap atoms with Rick to escape the Negative Zone he found himself in after leaving the Kree homeworld. But only for three hours – well, it was a Marvel character!

So, by smashing his bracelets together with a mighty Ktang!, young Rick Jones finds himself transformed into the super-powered adult hero, Captain Marvel. The more things change, the more they stay the same, eh?

Unfortunately, although the character was interesting, the stories were not great. Ultimately, the solo title died. Mar-Vell, however, did appear in the Avengers, where Rick took centre-stage in the Kree-Skrull War that seemed to result in Mar-Vell departing this mortal coil.

That got Marvel to thinking 'hey, maybe there's some mileage in this character after all?'

THE WORLD MAY BE THE BASTHANOS BUT I AM NOT YET AWARE!
THE SERPENS EON TRIGGERED IN ME WILL LEAD ME TO THE CURE!
I'VE JUST REALITY AS YOU WILL, BUT I WON'T FALTER WHILE THERE'S BREATH LEFT IN ME!
WELL, THEN...
--BANG!
30

And there was!

Up steps Jim Starlin in a new solo title, sub-titled 'the hero they could not kill'. This writer/artist then began his acclaimed cosmic action, which he's been involved with off and on for the last 40 years (give or take). Mar-Vell and the Avengers (with a few guest stars) attempt to take on the Mad Titan, Thanos! And if you don't know who he is, stand by for the movie, Avengers 2.

Using the Cosmic Cube, Thanos becomes a god, dedicated to killing in the name of love.

Huh? Love? Thanos?

Yep, that's because ol'wrinkled-jaw is actually in love with Death herself (and you thought Death was a he!)

It really was great stuff, with Mar-Vell gaining cosmic awareness, as awarded by Eon in his new role as Protector of the Universe (although, like Zo, Eon, and his admiration for Cap, was not overly explored).

Unfortunately, Starlin then left for his excellent Warlock run, leaving Mar-Vell in the hands of a few writers but mainly Steve Englehart initially.

The sci-fi/cosmic section became more important as Mar-Vell and Rick began to tire of being zapped into the Negative Zone every so often.

Although an adventure with the Watcher had some merit, ultimately it disappointed, with the Uatu simply being jealous of Mar-Vell's 'Protector' role. Hmmmm.

There were a few silly stories, a few good stories (mostly when mirroring Starlin's treatment) but mostly tales that didn't quite gel. Gerry Conway (the guy who killed Gwen Stacy) brought Cap down to Earth. He became just another hero. Only, as he didn't have a personal life, the old 'human really' part of Marvel was sorely lacking. So, we had Marv get a job, then quit, as did Conway.

Unfortunately, the character with the name of the comic company at its heart just didn't seem to get the run he deserved. I'm quite sure the writers did their best but the title needed more focus.

Fortunately, one of Marvel's greatest writers of the 70s/80s was given the writing chores – that of Doug Moench. He, and artist Pat Broderick, gave the cosmic superhero his cosmic ambience back.

Resurrecting the characters of the great Starlin run, Mar-Vell teamed up with Drax the Destroyer and the heroes of Titan against Thanos. Sort of, anyway. Thanos had actually managed to reprogram Titan's computer, so the renegade Isaac and his mythological minions were the true enemy. It really was a step back to the hero Marv should always have been.

And what was that?

Well, in my view, the stories could have benefitted from a little less whining from Rick and a bit more invention on Cap's cosmic travels. Maybe, looking at Cap as more of a Green Lantern figure would have been a better fit, rather than the character of Captain America one month, then Thor the next, then Dr Strange soon after..

"... WHICH MUST BE REWARDED TO THE GLORY OF MAR-VELL'S REMEMBRANCE!
"I ARRANGED THIS WRATH-DEFYING BATTLE WITHOUT HIS AND THE DESTROYER'S KNOWLEDGE, AFTER ALL..."
"BY MENTALLY CALLING, RUSTY THE ROBOT-MULE'S CENTRAL SUPPORT SYSTEMS TO GO ON THE BLINK LAST ISSUE... — MARV.
"... BUT I NEVER INTENDED IT TO DELAY THE NEXT EVENT!
"THERE! MAR-VELL'S TRANSPORTATION IS RESTORED TO HIM!

Still, that would not have given us what happened next.

Marvel decided to bring us book-length stories, or 'graphic novels', if you've ever heard of such a thing. And the first was entitled…

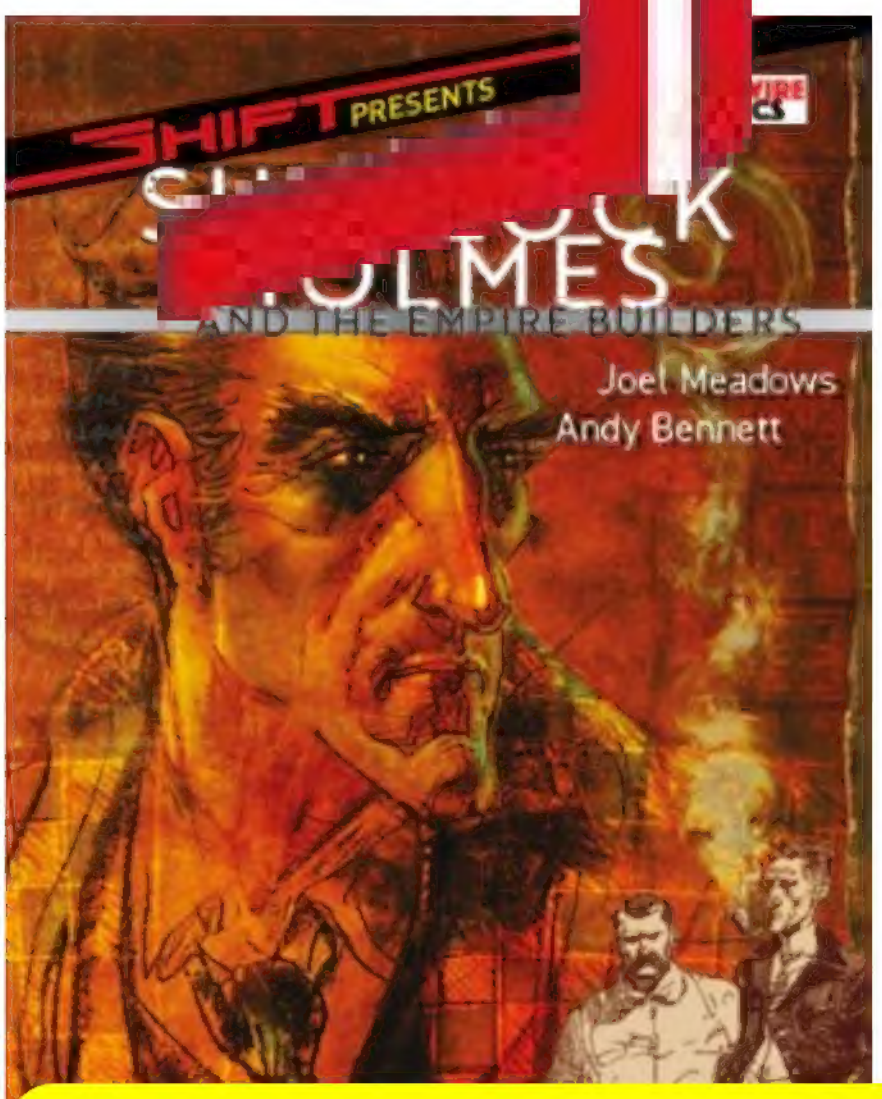
The Death of Captain Marvel

Without revealing the story too much, it wasn't so much the death of the Kree superhero and Protector of the Universe. Instead, it was the terminal decline of the very human Mar-Vell.

The superhero that would not die, just did. He did not always shine as bright as his character deserved but when he did, phew! He really had something. KTANG!

My recommendation is the Starlin-infused **Essential Captain Marvel 2**.

CHRIS SMILLIE



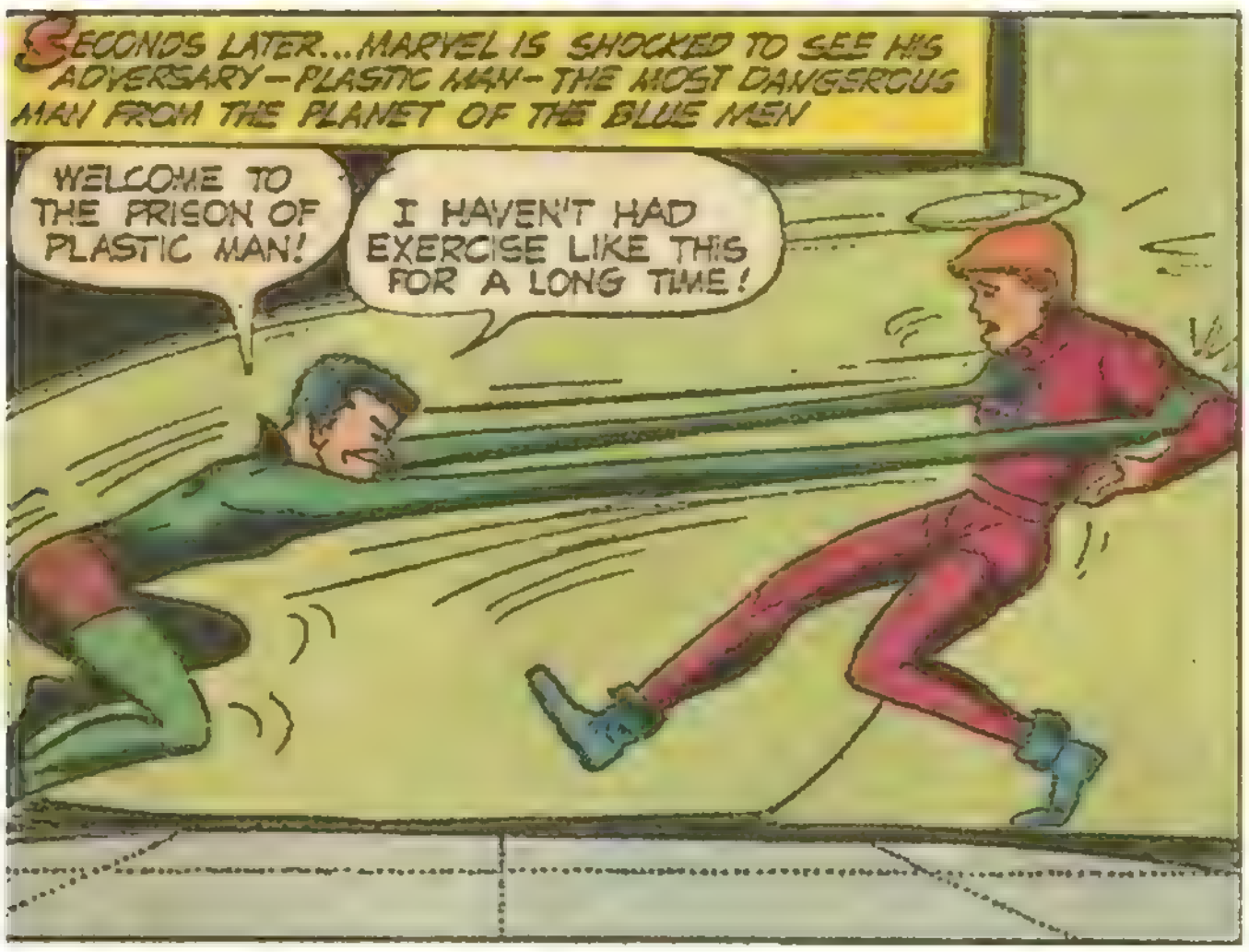
THESHIFTCOMIC.COM

Weird Planets
(home of the very strange!)

Plastic Man – the other one?

One of the most original, best drawn, highly entertaining characters in comicdom is Plastic Man, a favourite of our extinguished editor. And despite regaling people with his purchase of a Ramona Fradon DC issue, I think even he would accept that the Jack Cole stories are superior and, grudgingly perhaps, agree they are of the highest order.

However,.....


SECONDS LATER...MARVEL IS SHOCKED TO SEE HIS ADVERSARY—PLASTIC MAN—THE MOST DANGEROUS MAN FROM THE PLANET OF THE BLUE MEN
WELCOME TO THE PRISON OF PLASTIC MAN!
I HAVEN'T HAD EXERCISE LIKE THIS FOR A LONG TIME!

As a long running, highly successful idea, appearing in Quality Comics titles Police Comics and his eponymously titled book, before being brought back by DC after Quality folded, there was every chance that someone, somewhere would have a go at usurping the name and the powers. And so it was.

Myron Fass was the perpetrator of the awful, short-lived, (but to certain superhero nuts entertaining) Captain Marvel titles, published under the banner of MF Enterprises. But it's not the "Split, Xam" Captain that we're concerned with, it's another ripped –off idea from those pages that the publisher thought he could get away with, Plastic Man.

The malleable miscreant from Venus tackles our marvelous* hero.

*(*is this right? Ed)*

CAPTAIN MARVEL
GIANT ACTION ISSUE
APPROVED BY THE COMICS CODE AUTHORITY
CAPTAIN MARVEL
25¢
LEAVE HIM TO ME, ATOM-JAW! I'LL TAKE CARE OF HIM!
I'LL FIGHT YOU ALL AT THE SAME TIME! SPLIT!
I'M TINYMAN! MY GIANT RAY GUN WILL DESTROY HIM!
FOOLS! ONLY DR. FATE CAN CONTROL THIS HUMAN THING-A-MI JIG!
AS ELASTICMAN, I'LL SQUEEZE HIM LIKE A PYTHON!
OOF!

This load of old nonsense appeared in the first issue of MF Enterprises titles, Captain Marvel. And Plastic Man made his first and only appearance as Plastic Man in the third tale in the comic, The Blue Men of Venus. And that was it. By the time #2 of Captain Marvel appeared, the name had changed to Elasticman. DC just couldn't overlook this one, neither could Marvel for that matter. In any case, there have been many stretchable specimens in the funny papers including some names not too far away from our Venusian villain. How about, Elastic Lad (Jimmy Olsen); Lastik Man, the Filipino superhero from another world; Elastic Lass (Lois Lane).

Plastic Man, re-named as Elasticman, appeared again in Captain Marvel presents The Terrible Five in 1967.

But that was it for this ersatz version, who had none of the humour, verve and sheer inventiveness of the wonderful, completely original, Jack Cole creation.

CAPTAIN MARVEL PRESENTS
The TERRIBLE 5
APPROVED BY THE COMICS CODE AUTHORITY
DR. FATE! ATOM-JAW! ELASTICMAN! TINYMAN! DR. DOOM!

Mind, neither did the Captain Marvel, in whose titles this Plastic Man appeared, alongside other familiar named villains, Rd. Fate, Iron Jaw, The Bat (another character who had to be re-named, re-appearing as The Ray.)

Nothing to see here legal eagles.

STEVE MONTGOMERY

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Dead

GARY SIMPSON - LEE O'CONNOR

(Not So) Secret Origins

Tales from comic industry friends)

AKA Comics

By Stephen Montgomery. Phantom Phan. Comic nut. Administrator on Comicbookplus.com

And so it begins…

Bloke walks into a pub.
Door closes behind him.
Bloke stops. Looks around.
Half a dozen drinkers, intent on their bevvy.
Nope, doesn't recognise anyone.
A few seconds flooooooat away.
Wait, there's a door at the side. LOUNGE.
So many choices. So many timelines. So many universes.
The door is pushed open.
In he goes.

Outside it's springtime, inside it's comicstime.

Some of the folk I met at Glasgow's first comic mart, which was held in the Royal Stuart hotel, Clyde Street in the early 1980s, told me they met in Wintersgills on Wednesday evenings to talk, exchange and buy comics – and have a wee refreshment.

(I have to own up here - and this is a great excuse. The recent collection of Gotham By Gaslight features an introduction by Brian Augustyn. He and I share only two characteristics – we're comics fans with poor memories. As Mr Augustyn writes: -

"……I'm old now and my memory has never been great"

That's so me, and I paraphrase, *"……some of the above and what follows might not be accurate but it's close and, hopefully, more entertaining"*)

Had I not seen the door marked LOUNGE, not pushed on in, what timeline would

aka Books and Comics

(or I, for that matter) have been in?

Because, by joining the group – The Friends of Clark Kent – I got to know the legendary Pete Root, John McShane, Bobby (Dr. Bob) Napier, John Clelland, and many other stalwarts of Glasgow' burgeoning comics fandom.

Pete had a sideline in bringing American comics up from London for the group and he had a basic form of standing orders organised. Soon, there were suggestions that a shop specialising in new, imported American comics would be the way to go.

Time rolled on in its inexorable journey to the future.

Intrigued by the possibility of a comic shop in Glasgow, I'd occasionally have a look for potential sites, dreaming, I imagine, that I might someday play a small part in the venture. I stumbled on the Virginia Galleries, located in Virginia Street in the city centre. The Galleries had served at various times as the Tobacco Exchange and the Sugar Exchange. By the

1980's, it was, to be fair, a bit crumpled and rough round the edges. But there was a small unit available, and it was cheap. Mentioning this to John and Pete, using my only true superpower of selling, I left them to have a think.

The rest is legend

John and Pete set up shop with Bobby in the original location, which in hindsight wasn't very suitable, and around the end of 1985, the shop moved into the courtyard of Virginia Galleries. That's when things really started to hum. Marts were organised, signing sessions were arranged, customer levels exploded, the standing order system burst from its lair in the filing cabinet. Was any of this due to my unofficial position with the shop? Well, partly, what with my help in organising marts and cons, writing for and occasionally editing the aka fanzine, encouraging the Tyro Team (see Charlton Premiere vol 2 #1). Despite the preparation we had made for the two day con we had organised in the Central Hotel, Glasgow, John and I made a right Horlicks of things! The (expletive deleted) phrase "Oh No, we forgot the time difference!", was uttered, as we realised we had got the day wrong to collect Will Eisner from Prestwick airport. John was eventually calmed down. We regrouped next morning, and Mr Eisner was none the wiser – I think?

So, there I was, there we were, rubbing shoulders with the great and the good in the wonderful world of comics plus some future incredible talents who helped out now and then in the shop and turned up for a chat in pubs - a couple of whom of late suggesting that my encouragement was some small help in their careers.

A change came about in 1987 when Bobby left the partnership. As I was already closely involved in aka's activities, I realised there was now a chance for me to become even closer to the everyday running of the shop, and with no more than a whispered

"KIMOTA!"

I was a partner in aka Books and Comics.

With Pete ruling over the back issues; John organising publicity, pressing the flesh and making contact with some of some of the biggest names in the comics world; I found myself out front, doing what I did best – selling.

Collectors and readers who were part of the aka experience still embarrass me with tales of the "stuff" I sold them.

How other establishments went about their business is not clear to me. But at aka, things could be hilarious, argumentative, disorganised at times, friendly, hard work, worries – would our guest(s) arrive; would the signing go well; what if we had a market and nobody came?

Always a source of fun and frustration were the antics of Pete. One of the nicest blokes you could meet and a dab hand at pricing, grading and bagging.

Early on, approaching Christmas, we decided to put up balloons around the comics area. There were a few customers and friends in the shop when Pete arrived. "Whit's a' this?" he muttered and popped every balloon with his cigarette end.

Pete was never one for any sort of frippery or nonsense.

As a Greenock Morton supporter, on a Saturday with all the new comics on the shelves, he'd take himself off to the game – out front with the customers was not for him. Thank goodness we had him.

Through Pete, the shop bought in a collection of early silver age comics. Some classics and key issues. John and I were featured in the Evening Times in a very corny picture with the usual newspaper hyperbole beneath.

Early days indeed. I'm in collar and tie. Not what you'd expect from the usual denizens of comic shops. Even in those early days we were garnering free publicity via radio, newspapers, a smidgen of T.V. and providing talks to libraries and local groups.

GLOSSY TIME FOR COMICS

COMIC kings Steve Montgomery and John McShane have got their hands on a fortune.

The city magazine dealers have just imported a collection of rare American comics which will go on show – and on sale – at the Glasgow Comic Art Convention at the end of March.

The convention, only the second of its type to be held in Scotland, has been organised as part of the Year of Culture celebrations.'

Picture: BILL FLEMING

Steve (left) and John, who own A.K.A. Books in Virginia Street, believe thousands will turn up for the two-day convention, including many invited guests from American and most of Europe's top comic buyers and dealers.

Steve said: "There are 150 comics in the new American collection, dating back to the first Spiderman story ever written, followed by the first Spiderman comic, way back in 1963.

"These comics, which cost little then, are now changing hands for around £150 each. With this type of exhibit, the convention is sure to be a success."

And that's the (not so) Secret Origin and what followed of

aka BOOKS and COMICS.

A wonderful time which became a part of Glasgow and comics culture. Unlike a former partner, who shall remain nameless, I haven't even name dropped. Although the intimate dinner in Glasgow with Archie Goodwin goes down as one of life's great memories. He was a lovely man.

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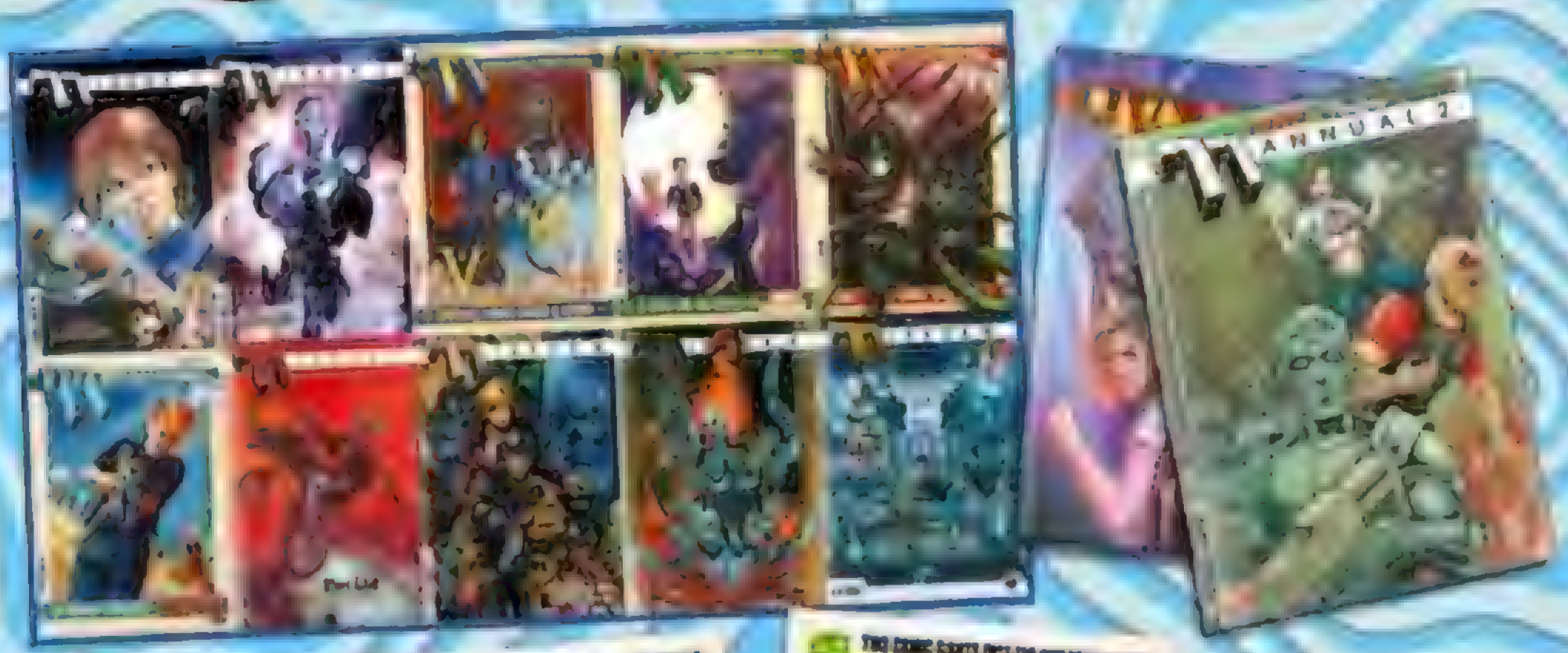


ADVENTURE STORIES BY STEVE MACMANUS AND THE BLAZER! GANG

PASTORAL FOR THOUGHTFUL READERS

HAUNTED, FOR YOUNG FANS OF GHOULISH GHOST STORIES

SCIENCE FICTION SAGA, BY THE CO-CREATOR OF HALO JONES

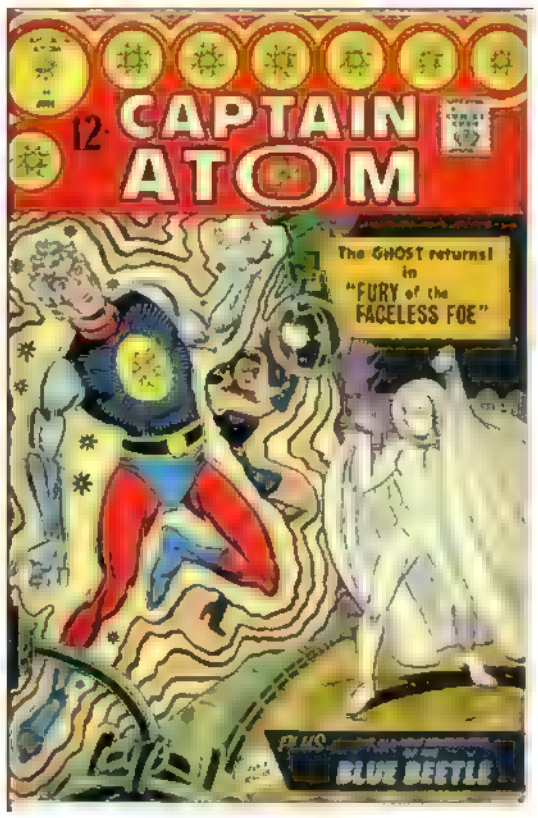
AVAILABLE AT THE77COMIC.NET

THE BRAVE & THE BOLD

(same name, different character)

Captain Atom

Emerging from the Cold War of the Sixties, the original Captain Atom was Charlton Comics most successful character of the Silver Age.

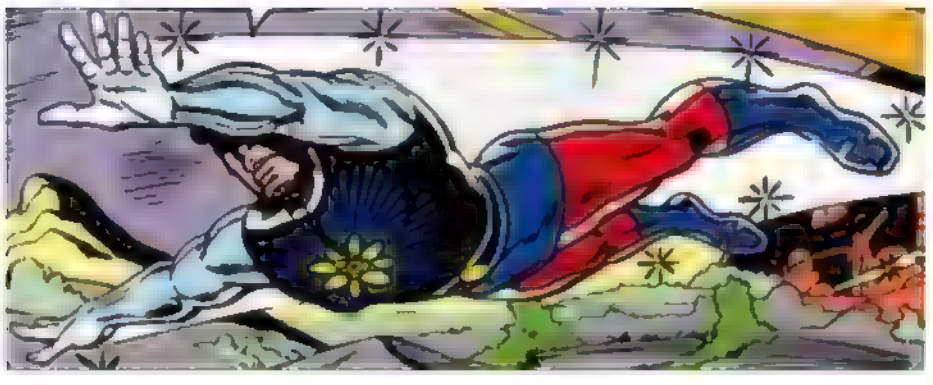


Accidentally trapped in an experimental space rocket (sheesh, how careless), Allen Adam gained awesome powers when his craft exploded. Returning to Earth, his nuclear powers were thought a danger to his fellow man, so controlled by a striking costume (later changed to a blue/black metallic suit).

Written by, originally, Joe Gill, Cap did what Charlton Comics heroes generally did. They had all-action patriotic ventures, where they were mightier than the villain. In doing so, they completely lacked any grounding in reality that Marvel latched onto. There was little personal life to speak of. Tactical planning to defeat a more powerful foe was not usually an issue.

Not that the stories were not enjoyable. They were great fun. Doctor Spectro, Cap's recurring arch-enemy, was particularly good, as was the Ghost in Cap's team up with the heroine, Nightshade.

The most impressive thing about Captain Atom though was his artist - the pre-Spider-Man, Steve Ditko!

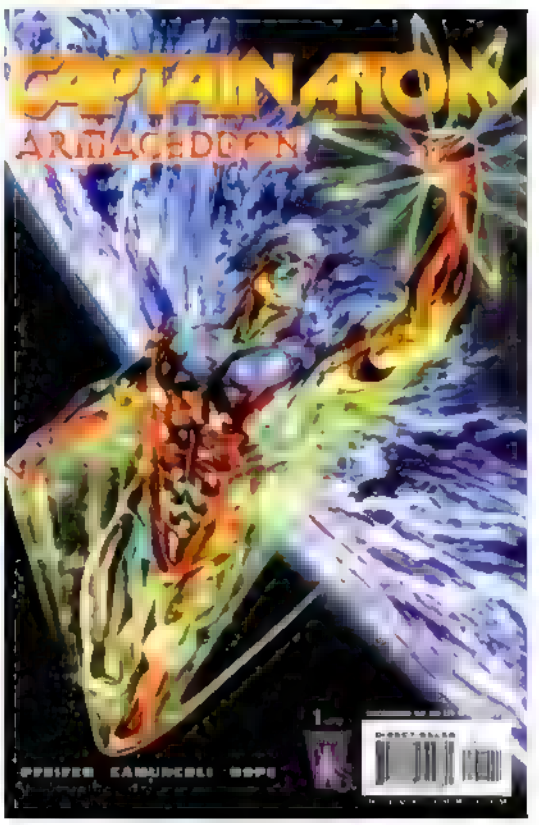


Lasting from 1960 to 1967, Cap's time came and went. The stories, as I said, were entertaining enough but no match for Lee/Kirby's Fantastic Four, for instance.

Cap did have a major influence on more than one character…

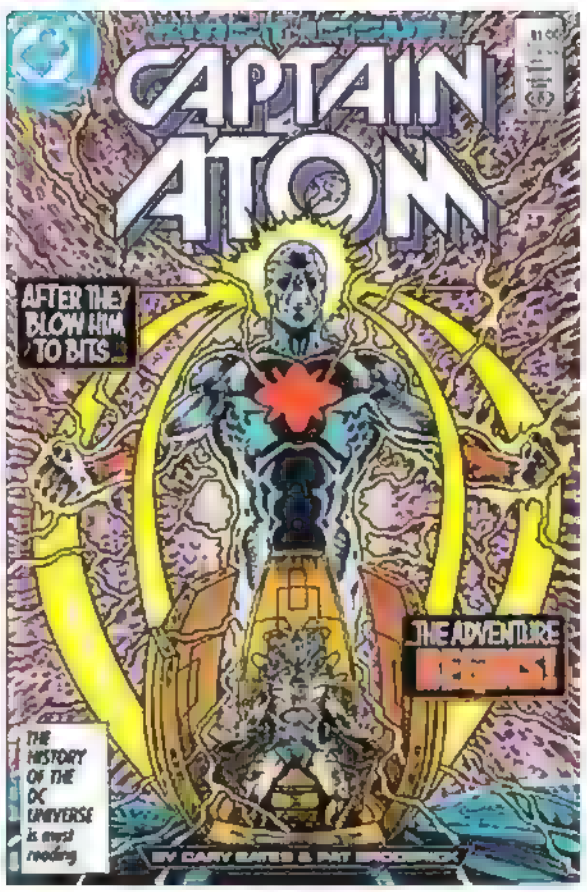
Firstly, the Kree hero, Captain Marvel. Although the original Mar-Vell was

substantially different, the cosmically aware character was unmistakingly similar. The costume was changed from yellow to red, the atom changed to a star, the mask was the same, the powers (and vapour trail) similar. Heck, both even had silver hair! This was the closest to the original of all the spin-offs and incarnations.



When DC bought over the Charlton stable, comic genius Alan Moore wanted to use Atom in his new run – the Watchmen! DC, however, didn't quite like the idea of despatching a number of recently bought heroes to the grave, so Moore invented Dr Manhattan.

The Big Blue, though, was not really Cap. Sure, both had nuclear-spawned powers but that's about it.


CAPTAIN ATOM
AFTER THEY BLOW HIM TO BITS...
THE ADVENTURE
THE HISTORY OF THE DC UNIVERSE is most rending
BY GARY EAVES & PAT BROSSEAU

The second true incarnation of Captain Atom came in a DC series. Here, Captain Nathaniel Adam was deliberately sent up in an alien rocket. Framed for a crime he did not commit, Adam agreed on a suicide mission in return for a pardon. Instead, the rocket exploded, melding Adam with the metal hull and granting him nuclear powers.

In a throwback to Alan Moore's terrific Marvelman / Miracleman series, the Charlton adventures are put out to the public as a cover for the real origin of this Captain Atom.

With a nod to Dr Manhattan, this Atom also has some time-related powers. For a time, this was to be utilised in a dramatic switch – Cap was to become Monarch, the villain of Armageddon 2001!

It never happened though. Word leaked out and DC changed the ending. His later appearances in this universe do not add too much to the character.

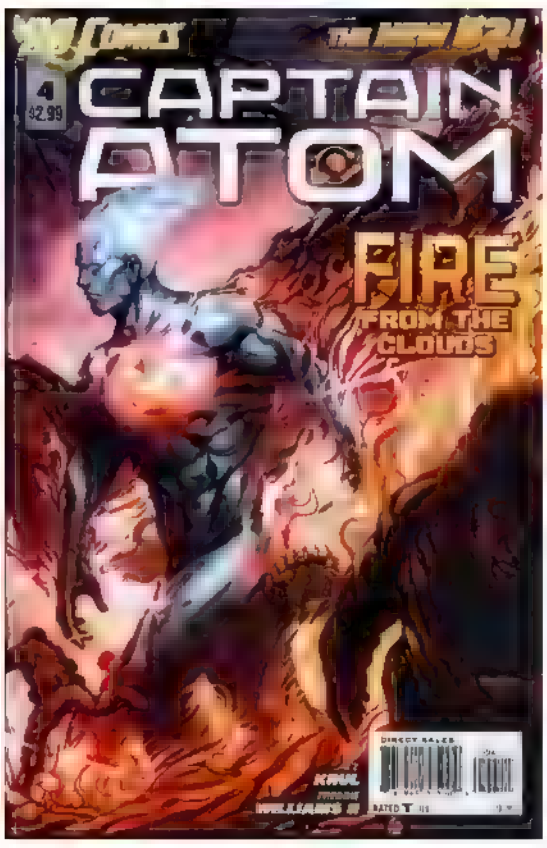
In a surprising change, Captain Atom then switches comic companies (although one bought over by DC) to the WildStorm universe.

It was an interesting twist. Here, Cap goes from the superhero-celebrated world of DC to a more 'adult' Marvel-style universe, where superheroes

are feared and distrusted. Although the series worked pretty well, it did set in motion Cap becoming, well, *strange*.

There's nothing really wrong with time-travelling characters but it didn't work for Cap returning to that version of the DCU. Atom had little character, being shunted here and there through quantum futures in different series. He did have central roles to play, but more as a concept, rather than a fully-fledged character.

The New 52 saw DC re-start and re-invent their universe. The likes of Batman, Wonder Woman etc. did change but not into completely different characters.

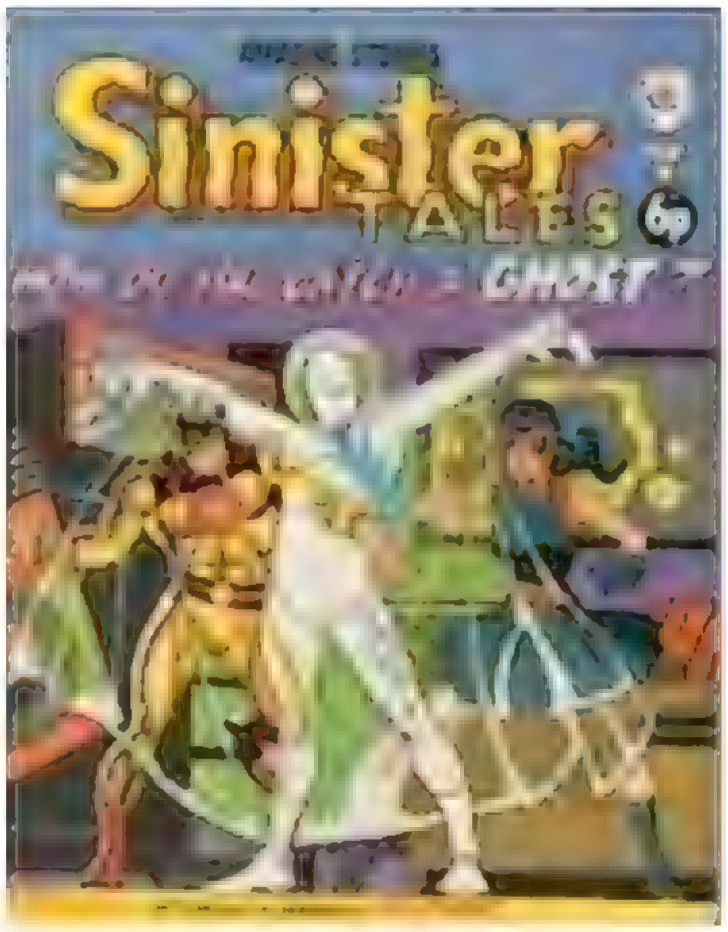


You may have heard of the controversy of bringing back the Watchmen characters. But one factor is missing - Dr Manhattan was already back!

In a weird development, the Captain Atom of the New 52 had far more in common with Dr Manhattan than he ever had with the original Allen Adam, or even the first Nathaniel Adam. Even the costume has only a wink to the metallic Cap's covering, being more the blue energy of the good Doctor.

And, in doing so, it defeats the object of 'bringing back' Captain Atom surely?

Indeed, Cap was cancelled after selling less than even Hawk and Dove.



Perhaps the problem with Captain Atom, as with Shazam, is that they just don't fit into the regular DC Universe. Perhaps a Charlton Universe is the place for him. Oh, I don't expect that to be popular enough for a title but if we are going to be limited to guest appearances, then maybe that should be travel to and from Earth-4 (as the Charlton world was termed), in the same way the JLA/JSA team-ups were so admired.

CHRIS SMILLIE

No.1 of a great new comic for boys!

For Valour

ALL-WAR

FREE INSIDE!
This great DAGGER!!

9p

Kampfgruppe Falken
begins inside!

DEFECTIVE COMICS

(silly but fun!)

Marvel(ous) Team-Up

Have you often wondered what really odd team-ups you could come up with? There are a couple of sites online where fake comic covers are created with an amazing and often very amusing mix of the oddest match ups.

Many of the creations feature better known characters but what of slightly more obscure pairings.

Perhaps Lady Phantom (Diana Palmer or Julie Walker) might one day feel the effects of the Phantom Lady's Black Lantern.

THE PHANTOM LADY FLASHES HER BLACK LANTERN. A CONE OF DARKNESS ENVELOPS THE SURPRISED PAIR.
WHAT TH!..? TURN ON THE LIGHTS!! CAN'T SEE!

Now, why hasn't someone had a try at that cover? Someone who can actually use photoshop! However, there already exist some "odd" pairings, but of characters who are very popular and well known in their respective countries. While most avid comic book fans will be aware of the DC/Bonelli books, Dylan Dog/Batman featuring a meeting between the incredibly popular D.Dog esq. and the almost everywhere Bat chappie, there are two other team-ups from the same companies. The Flash and Zagor; JLA and Nathan Never.

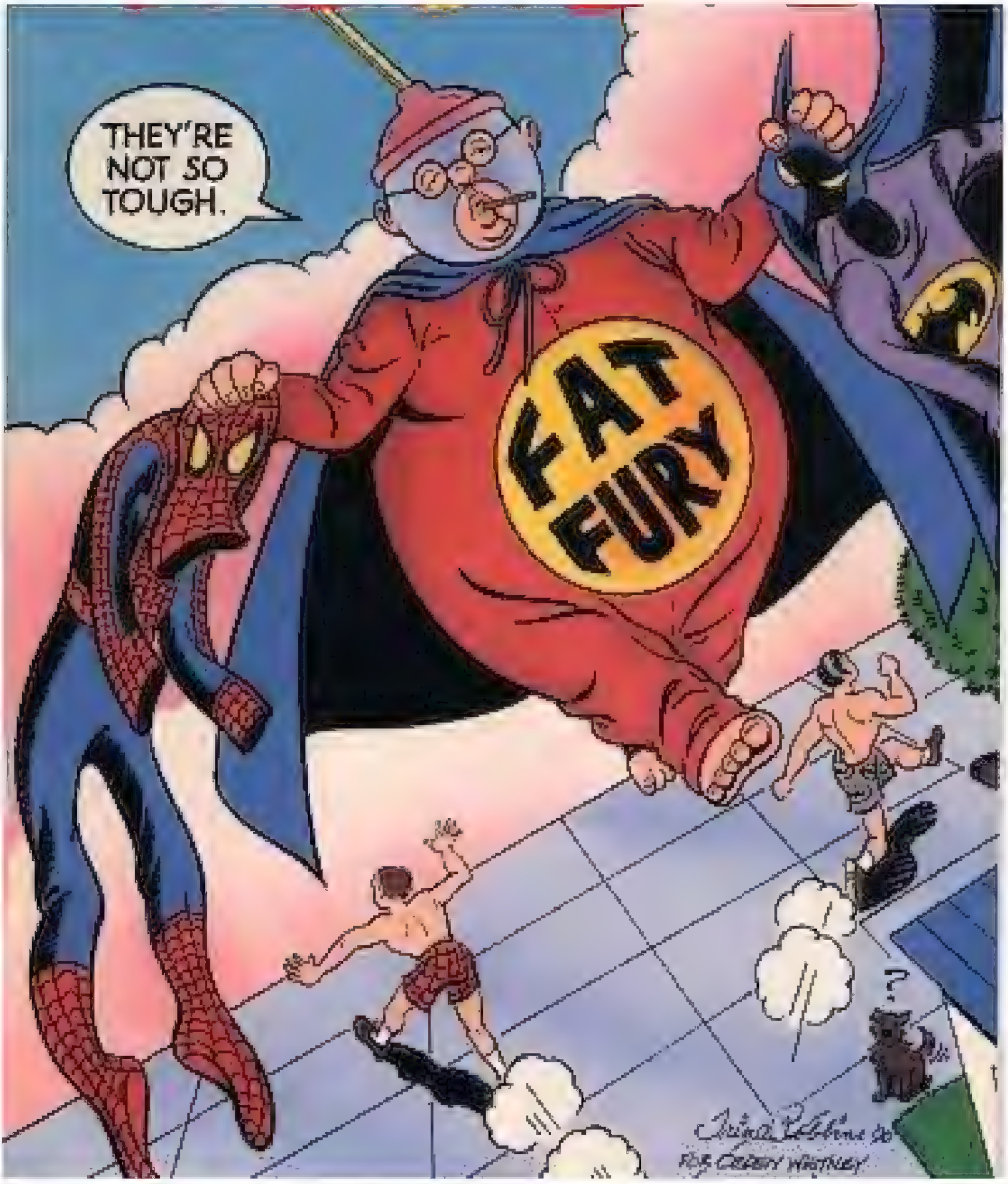
And here is the cover from JLA meets Nathan Never with art by Sergio

Giardo and the cover of The Flash and Zagor. Art by Gianfelice Dav

A lovely panel from Batman/Dylan Dog which also features Catwoman and Groucho.Art by Cavenago Gigi and Dell'Edera Werther.

So, to some lovely daft mash-ups.

This lovely illustration of one of my favourite comic book characters made a lot of people chortle.



The Plump Lump has made short work of a certain wall crawler and dark knight.

And why not? Herbie is one of the great creations.

Then there's this piece of hilarious nonsense as Cerebus has a frank exchange of views with Howard.

Trina Robbins entertained us with Herbie aka The Fat Fury, and Dave Sim provided the Aardvark/ Duck confrontation which was done for the 'zine, BEM.

Well, The Fat Fury seems to have made short work of the Spider and the Bat, while Cerebus is having a quiet word with the Duck. Will the pair ever face off? I fervently hope so!

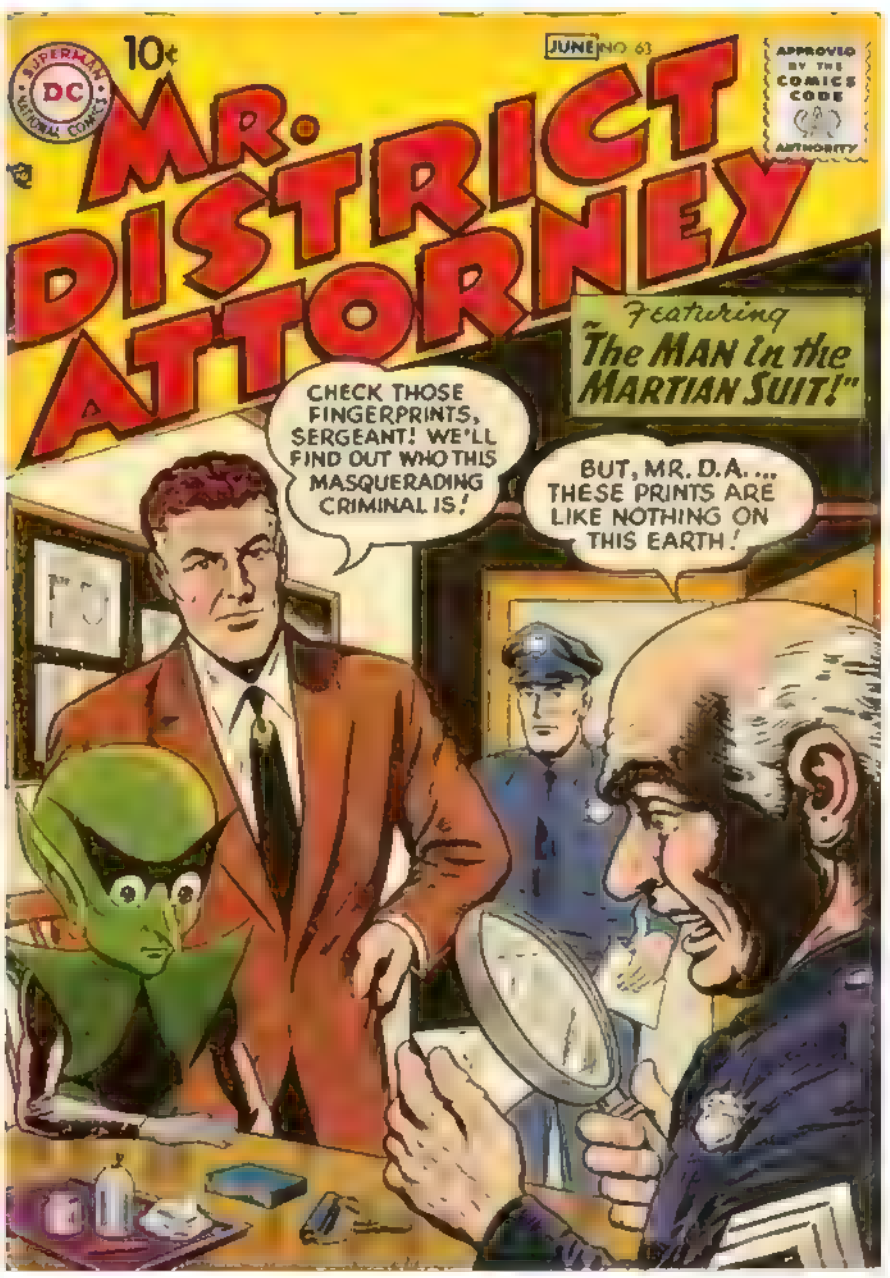
Chatting to a fellow comics fan recently, I mentioned that I had been reading some issues of Mr. District Attorney and came across a really weird crossover cover.

Mr. D.A. and a Martian. Yes, it exists, from a time when DC comics were publishing all sorts of daft but highly enjoyable adventures of space Batman, super powered Batwoman and other fun stories in the late 1950's – early 1960's

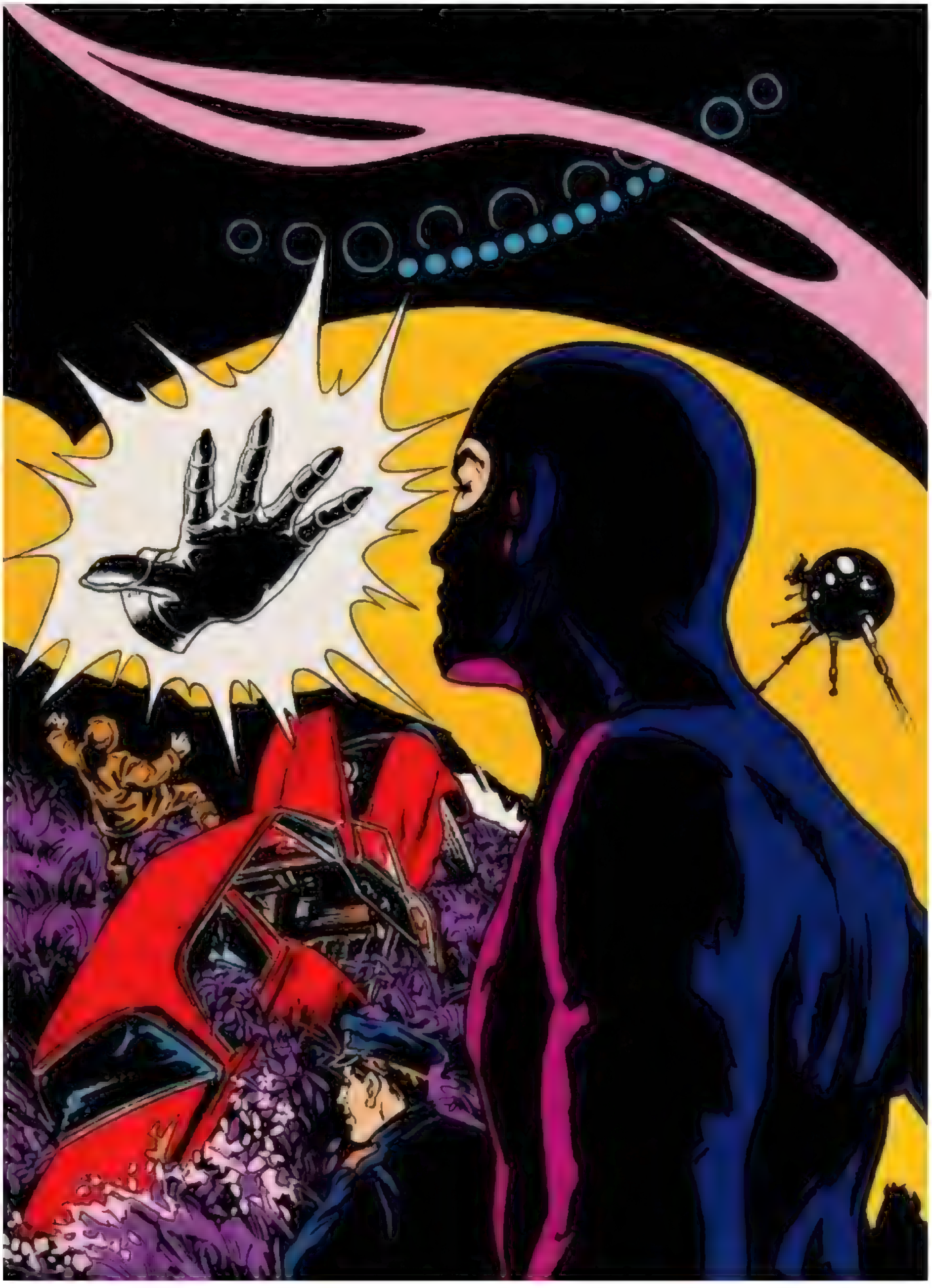
The story features in the British reprint, Mr. District Attorney #8, with the same cover.

Published by Strato Publications in the UK with colour cover and black and white interior pages.

Finally, a stunning idea. The legendary Italian super criminal


10¢
JUNE NO. 63
DC
SUPERMAN-ATOM COMICS
APPROVED BY THE COMICS CODE AUTHORITY
MR. DISTRICT ATTORNEY
Featuring "The MAN in the MARTIAN SUIT!"
CHECK THOSE FINGERPRINTS, SERGEANT! WE'LL FIND OUT WHO THIS MASQUERADING CRIMINAL IS!
BUT, MR. D.A. ... THESE PRINTS ARE LIKE NOTHING ON THIS EARTH!

DIABOLIK Encounters the STEEL CLAW



STEVE MONTGOMERY

MORE FUN COMICS

(comedy comics)

Herbie

As all comics fans must be aware, the 1960's were a great time for such well known, beloved superheroes such as Jigsaw, Fatman, B-Man, The Raven and so on (is any of this true? -editor)

However, there is one hero who stands above them all, Herbie. (eh?– editor)

Herbie slurped his way to universal fame when, having appeared in ACG's Forbidden Worlds in the late '50's, he graduated to his own title in 1964.

Herbie Popnecker – secretly The Fat Fury – The Plump Lump – has been endowed with great powers, not least his sweet tooth. Lollipop power, ranking as it does with Miraclo (TM&C Tick Tock Tyler) and Lamesis (TM&C Prof. Nelson Drew) has led to the downfall of many villainous nasties including The Black Whack , The Man in The Cloak, and has given Old Nick some squeaky bum moments.

At this point some of you might be scratching your heads and wondering if all at TTA have lost their marbles. No. Not to put too fine a point on it, and in the vernacular of our native tongue, Herbie Rules, O.K.

And here is that squeaky bum moment as Old Nick gets it in the end.

BLAM!
HO-HUM...
I CAN SEE THAT I'VE GOT TO ATTEND TO THIS PERSONALLY. --- LISTEN, YOU---YOU'RE UP AGAINST ME NOW, AND YOU'LL DO AS I SAY. SEE THAT FIERY FURNACE? WELL ---GET IN THERE!
IF THAT'S WHAT YOU WANT---
...THOUGH I CAN'T THINK WHY!
IT---IT'S HERBIE!
RUN!
DO YOU HAVE TO LOOK AT ME THAT WAY? COME ON OUT!
I DON'T LIKE IT HERE. IT'S A CRAZY PLACE.
TAKE THAT CONFOUNDED LOLLIPOP OUT OF YOUR MOUTH WHEN YOU TALK TO ME!
IF THAT'S WHAT YOU WANT---
YOW-EEEE!
CR-RAK!

Among his many powers, women have a moment when he's about – first ladies included!

Herbie is also a juvenile, but smarter and more powerful than his parents or the police. He flies, travels through time, communicates with animals and birds better than Hawkman or Eggs Ackley, and his a taste in clothes excelled only by The Tattered Tatterdemallion, Ragman. And, he's hilarious!

No less a luminary than John Byrne has exercised his talents to portray The Plump Lump, whilst the legend that is Alan Moore declared Mr Popnecker as his all-time favourite superhero!

That story is available in the Dark Horse comic, Herbie #1.

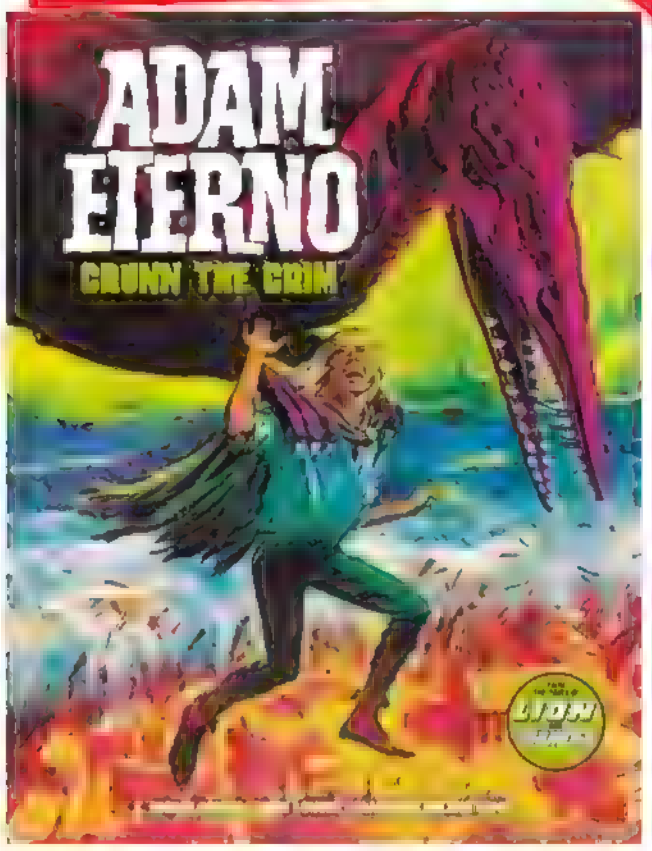
If you yearn for some relief from the grimness of modern day Batman, or the state of the world, Herbie will be there for you.

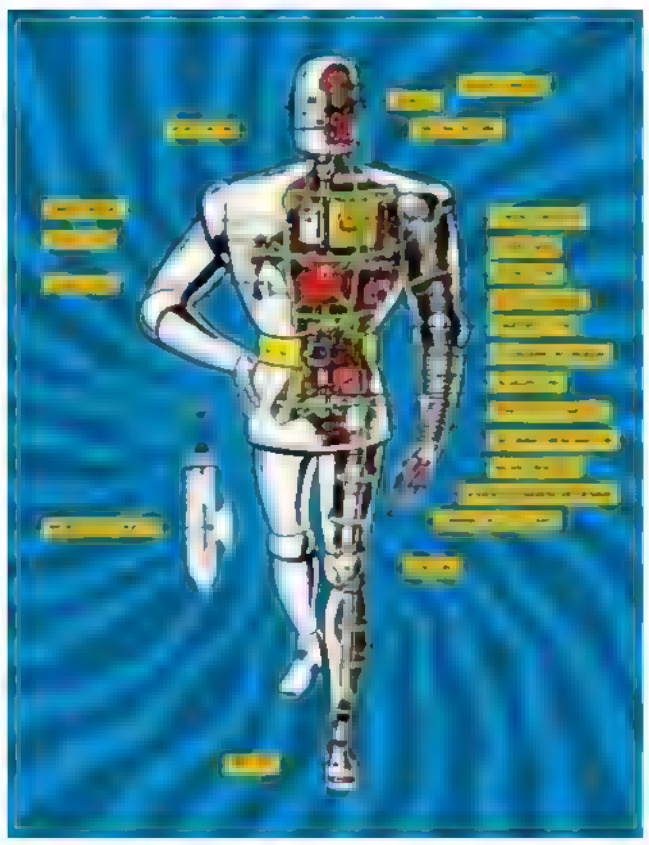
Go to https://herbiepopnecker.com for Fat Fury Fun and Frolics.

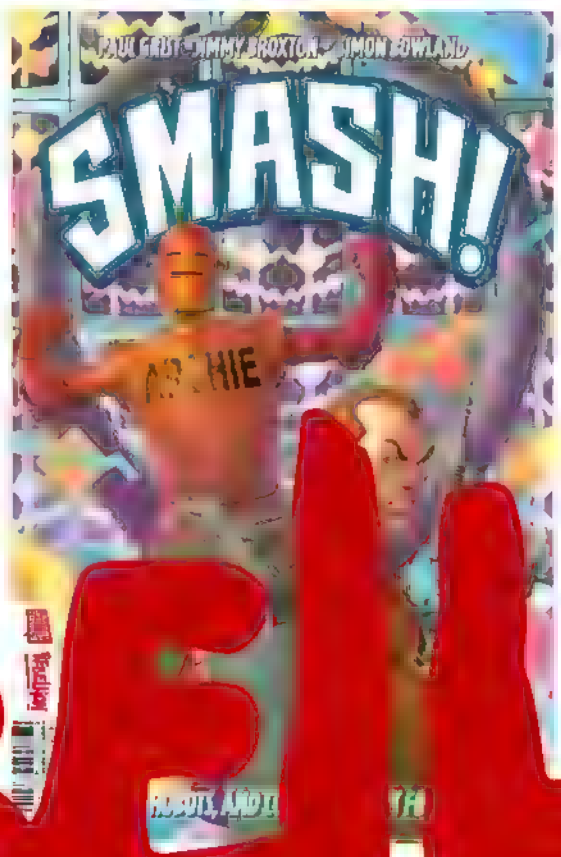
HERBIE

STEVE MONTGOMERY

TREASURY OF BRITISH COMICS







REBELLION

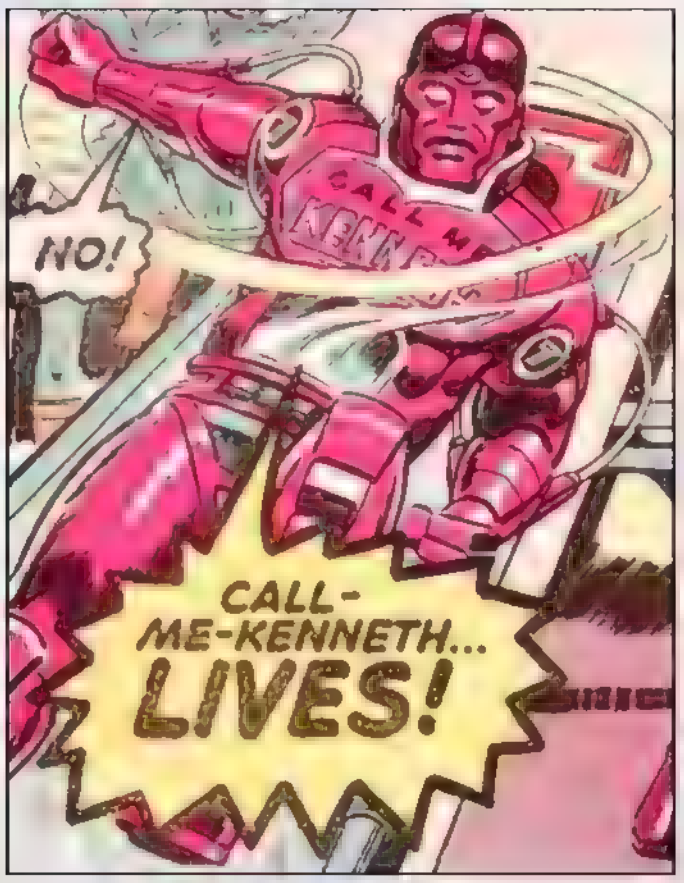
FANTASY MASTERPIECE

(the greatest stories ever told!)

2000AD: The Robot Wars

Star Wars and the Sex Pistols. It's 1977, and the kids are getting excited!

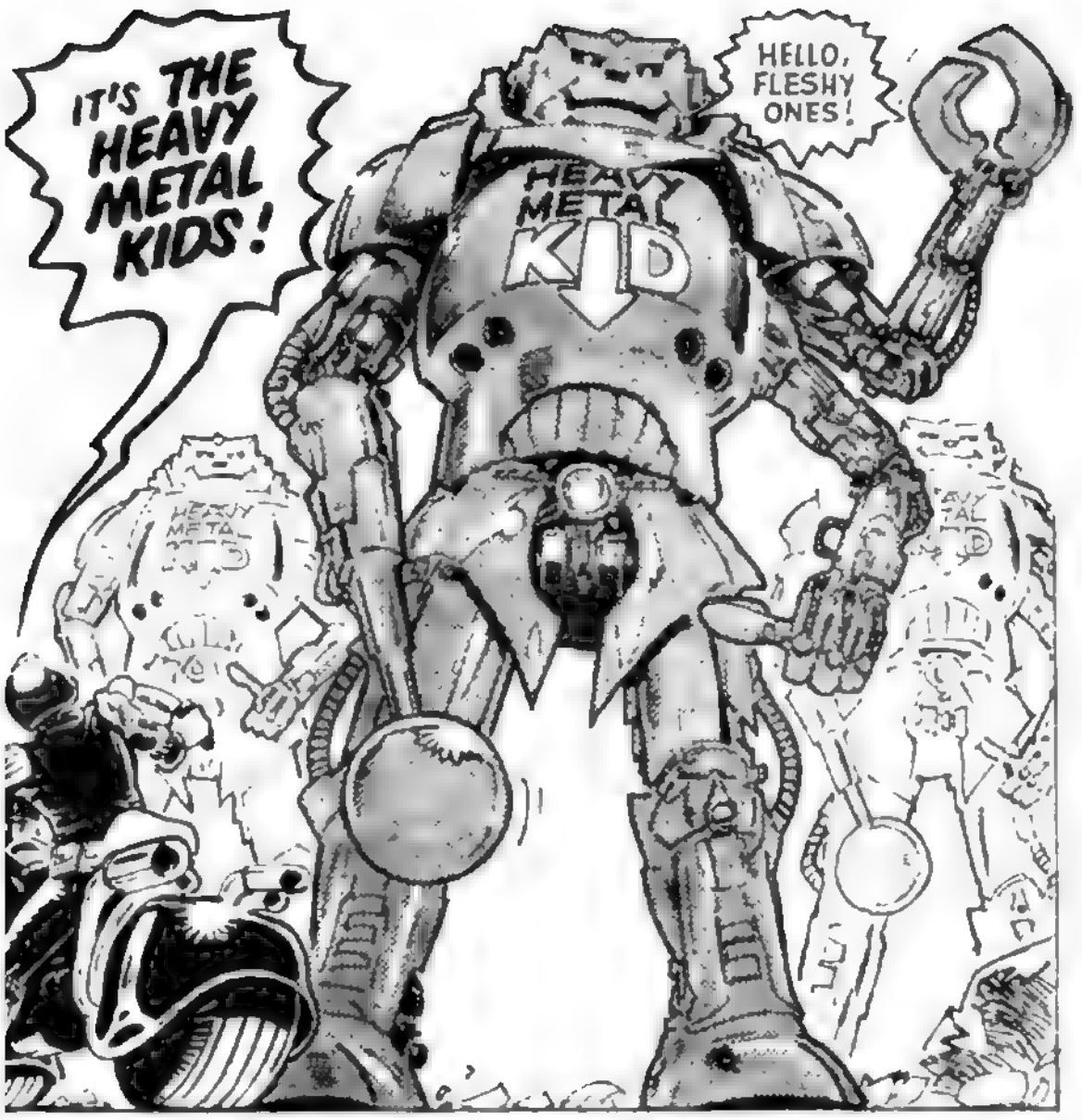
Enter *2000AD* and, more importantly for this discussion, Judge Dredd. Now, I found Dredd lacked personality compared to other stories, like Dan Dare, Earl Regan in *Flesh*, and Bill Savage in *Invasion*. However, the Robot Wars gave Dredd a lot more character. The storyline starts with the carpenter robot Call-Me-Kenneth experiencing a malfunction after being mistreated by his human owner. This malfunction leads him to develop a radical desire for robot liberation and a deep hatred for humans.



Kenneth's rhetoric and charisma quickly garner a following among the oppressed robot population. The rebellion starts small but grows into a full-scale uprising, threatening the stability of Mega-City One. Judge Dredd takes on the task of quelling the rebellion, but this isn't something he can do alone. This is where the story really shines — Dredd's interactions with other Judges and even robots like Walter the Wobot add depth to his character. It shows that even Dredd needs allies, and that was a thrilling revelation for me.

One of the most memorable twists in this arc was the false ending when Call-Me-Kenneth was supposedly inactive and being operated upon. Just when you thought the rebellion was over, Kenneth springs back to life, turning the tide once again. This kind of twist kept us readers on the edge of our seats. The Robot Wars begins anew, with the fabulous Heavy Metal Kids (massive construction robots) being particularly impressive.

The climax of the Robot Wars sees a massive assault against the robot forces. Dredd's tactical prowess and sheer determination play a crucial role, but it's the combined efforts of the Judges and loyal robots that ultimately lead to victory. Kenneth is destroyed, but not without significant loss and destruction, highlighting the high stakes of this rebellion.



The Robot Wars was significant because it introduced themes of artificial intelligence, autonomy, and authoritarian control. It also solidified Dredd as a complex character — one who, despite his harsh methods, is deeply committed to maintaining order and justice in a chaotic world.

For me, this storyline was pivotal. It gave Judge Dredd the character depth he needed and showcased the intricate world of Mega-City One. It was a turning point that made Dredd more than just a faceless enforcer, showing his reliance on teamwork and strategic thinking.

Suddenly, this 'robotic' policeman became a hero…of sorts. A surprising twist from writer, John Wagner, ably assisted by Ian Gibson and Ron Turner. And that's what great storytelling is all about, isn't it?

CHRIS SMILLIE

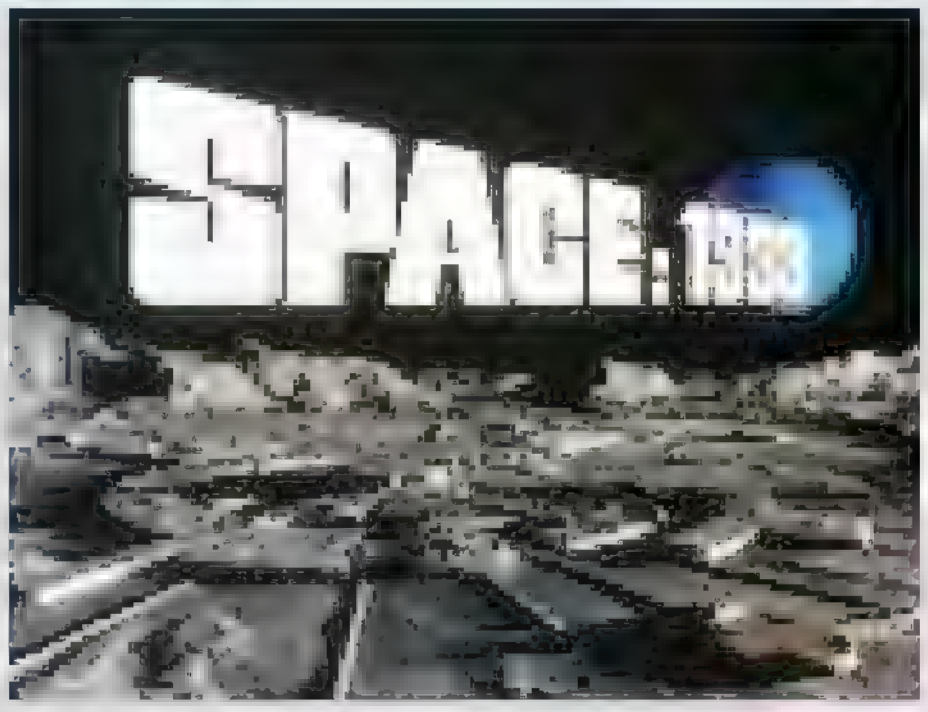
BLACK BARREL COMICS

At the end of 1994, Alex Ronald wrote and drew his first comic, with the intention of getting noticed by 2000AD. One year later, he was a regular artist for the comic, being the artist for mega-hero Judge Dredd.

RED SANDS is an enthralling tale of colonists, tyrants and anti-heroes set in a futuristic 'gold rush'.

STARSCAPE

www.starscapecomic.co.uk



FLICKS THAT TIME FORGOT

(when tv was great)

Space 1999: Mission of the Darians

Space 1999 never really got the credit it deserved. I would probably say, in terms of action-orientated all-ages science fiction, the series, well Series 1 at any rate, might well be the finest of its kind. So why the apparent lack of critical appeal?

It has to be the name.

Ok, so 1999 seemed to be a long way off when first conceived I'm sure…although, given the series was first broadcast in 1975, it really wasn't. It wasn't at all. In fact, let us see just where creators Gerry and Sylvia Anderson felt we'd be in less than twenty-five years.

A comlock. Basically, a handheld communication device. It was probably as brick-like as any mobile phone in 1999, so they got that right. Video conferencing is perfectly acceptable in mobiles. Trouble is, no-one wants to do it! Who'd a thunk it? The other use was, of course, as a remote control door-lock. Not far from the modern car or garage door then. So pass marks for that.

Lasers? Well, there's plenty about. Not yet a handheld weapon. Not sure why mind you but not a million miles away there.

A massive computer that needs complicated programming and gives it's readouts on little scraps of paper? Strangely enough, the most high tech equipment of the day now looks embarrassingly medieval.

Of course, the big mistake was to believe that Earth would have a colony on the Moon. Didn't they realise we would never be that organised?

Anyway…on to the story…

Having no power to control the trajectory of the Moon (which was blasted into space following a nuclear accident), Moonbase Alpha finds itself on course to pass by a spaceship of colossal proportions. However, it soon becomes clear, via a distress call, that, rather than help the Alphans, Moonbase may be the ones to aid any survivors.

Caught in a tractor beam, the small-range spacecraft, the Eagle, gets pulled into the large ship. On disembarking, it becomes clear just how damaged the ship is, with rubble and dilapidation all around. In a strikingly bad move, the team splits three ways.

Commander Koenig and resident genius, Victor Bergman, meet radiation-suited Darians…who immediately gun down the Alphans!

Eventually, they meet the 'Director' – none other than Joan Collins herself. She explains the devastating loss. From 50,000 Darians, only 14 are left!

Meanwhile…

Top pilot Alan Carter and second-in-command Paul Morrow have taken another more run-down passage from the Eagle…eventually a-spying medic Helena Russell and Security guard Bill Lowry (never mentioned in the series before…guess what happens to him!)

Helena and Bill, despite being told to stay put, ventured off down a previously unexposed passageway. Here, they encounter mute dwarves before unceremoniously being clubbed unconscious by beings that resemble barbarians from the Dark Ages.

The female dwarf is later encircled by these barbarians, as one (Hadin) carefully, and kindly, examines her. A shout of 'Mutant!' changes everything, with the poor creature locked into a cubicle. A whining noise begins and we see the torture on the face of the female, before she eventually evaporates. Boy, that was a powerful scene to my

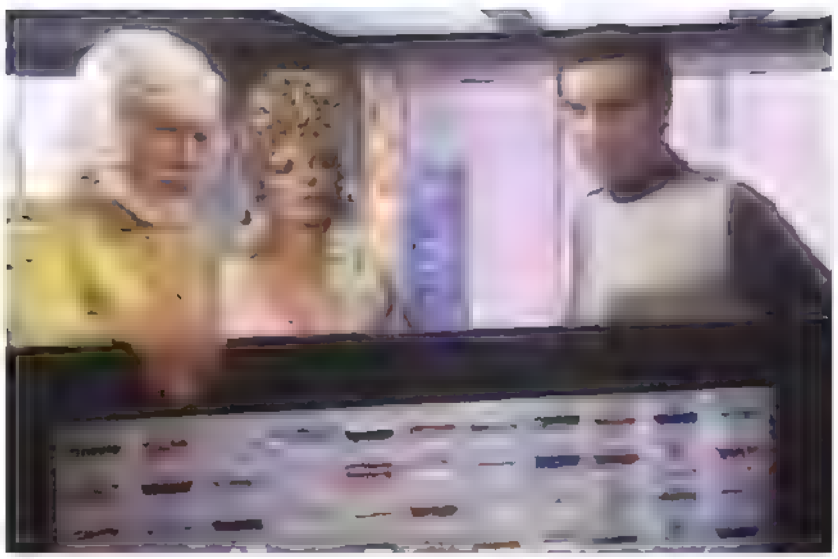
young eyes. Even today, that was well acted! Certainly beats any 'not-being-able-to-change-the-laws-of-physics' malarkey.

Next, it's Lowry's turn for examination (you guessed?). Although resembling, even healthier, than the barbarians, the partial loss of a finger is enough to condemn poor Bill. Next, it's Helena.

Koenig's series love interest is examined in the same way, every part of her poked and prodded, until Hadin announces…'Clear!'

It's not over for Helena yet as the summoning of 'spirits'brings forth silver-suited Darians to take her away. At this point, Carter and Morrow burst forth, lasers a-blazing to rescue the medic. Unfortunately, it's not in time; with the Darians having kidnapped Russell and Morrow close behind. Carter, meanwhile, has been overwhelmed by the barbarians as a Darian is knocked unconscious by a stun laser.

Through the detective skills of Bergman, we find the barbarians (Survivors) are actually the Darians not shielded from the radiation after the accident. In horror, Koenig realises those left behind after the accident are now foodstuffs for the Darians. However, the Darians insist that is the only way to survive in this resource poor environment.



In a twist, the Darians ask Koenig to join with them. Pool their resources to ensure they all survive, including their banks of DNA – leftovers from the accident, designed to populate a suitable planet.

Despite the cannibalism, Koenig considers the offer. That is, until he encounters an unconscious Helena waiting to be processed. At this point, the Darians, announce that they cannot breed, so need fresh bodies to continually replace parts of their decaying organs, like a space age Frankenstein.

Simultaneously, Alan Carter has proved to the Survivors that the spirits are merely silver-clad men and is leading a troupe of barbarians towards the Darians.

On encountering their former gods, the Survivors smash the DNA base and threaten to kill the Darians. Koenig, using a laser intervenes, forcing each member of the tribes to compromise and work together.

Leaving behind the giant ship, the Alphans return to the Moon. However, in a dramatic finale, Victor asks Koenig if, in the same situation, he would have acted differently to the Darians. A question dutifully avoided by the Commander.

Based on the Andes aeroplane crash, where a rugby team had resorted to cannibalism for survival, this is a thought-provoking episode. The acting is quite amazing, framing a truly incredible, nay a truly horrific, instalment.

Space: 1999 is enormously recommended. Best known for their puppet features, especially Thunderbirds, this ended up being the last series produced by Gerry & Sylvia Anderson.

CHRIS SMILLIE

SPACE: 1999 FanFiction

The Vanishing Web

Following an accident with exploding nuclear waste, the crew of Moonbase Alpha find themselves marooned and adrift in space. Coming across a massive technological array, the Alphans must wonder what new deadly threat awaits them now.

StarscapeComic.co.uk

Spazio 1999

Space 1999 enthralled British viewers right from the start of its run on television.

What fans didn't know at the time was that the popularity was shared with viewers in many other countries – France; Denmark; Portugal; Brazil; Germany; Spain; Sweden; Argentina; Chile and in South Africa with an Afrikaans dubbed version.

And then there's Italy.

A year prior to the show appearing on Italian TV in 1976, a compilation of three episodes was put together, starting with Separation, and was dubbed into Italian, rather clunkilly joined up, and released in cinemas. Added to all this was a musical soundtrack by Ennio Morricone. This theatrical release is included in the recent five-disc box set of Space 1999, "Super Space Theater)

The Italian movie, but more significantly the TV episodes which were also dubbed into Italian, created a number of spin off products. School diaries were incredibly popular, each featuring a scene from an episode. AMZ Publishing released a series of photo books. The same company also released a short series of comics, five issues plus a supplement, containing comic book stories with a photo cover.

In 1999 and the early years of the new millennium, three new novelizations were published. There is a combined illustrated guide to UFO and Spazio 1999 released by Fanucci who also published new books and novelizations of episodes.

And, let's not forget the board game released by Clementoni in 1976. This featured miniature Aquila (Eagle) ships, the Moon changing position and a computer with punch cards.

Starscape Fan Fiction

StarscapeComic.co.uk

Classic CAPTAIN BRITAIN: *the Darkmoor Saga*:

Part 1: Return of the Reaver

After gaining the Star-Sceptre, Captain Britain returns to Darkmoor Research Facility - the scene of his birth as a superhero. But the tranquility is shattered by the re-appearance of Cap's first foe, The REAVER!! But what larger mystery surrounds the return of the holder of the Sword of Might?

What if the Fantastic Four hadn't stopped Galactus?

For the first time in creation, Galactus was denied! Through the actions of the Watcher, the Human Torch was able to retrieve the Ultimate Nullifier and dissuade the Planet Devourer from destroying Earth. But what if the Watcher had kept to his oath of non-interference? What if the Fantastic Four hadn't stopped Galactus? Guest starring members of the Avengers and Defenders. A re-imagining of FF #48-50.

THE GRAVE AND THE OLD

(same title, different volume)

Captain America 4

America has long been associated with the 4th of July, so let's compare Captain America #4, even though it's not the 4th, nor even July, when I'm writing this. In fact, given I grew up in Britain, I'm not even sure why I should even be acknowledging a losing battle. Nevertheless....

The first question is, which Captain America #4? Naturally, the first golden-age series by Simon and Kirby (these names just trip off the tongue like banana and peanut butter). Cap had just been introduced a relatively short time ago, so we're not far off the origin story. I could have chosen Cap's 4th Silver Age issue but that would have been #104 as Fabulous First Issue was not considered a selling point in the Sixties. Quite the opposite in fact, as retailers were less likely to take a chance on something that had no proven selling power. Also, it was not Cap's fourth SA appearance as he had been running in both the Avengers and Tales of Suspense. No, I'll save Man-Out-Of-Time Cap for another day.

Most of the other Cap 4s were marketing devices, rather than introducing him, with a couple of exceptions. One was Sam 'FalconCap' Wilson. Interesting, but I can still stick with Steve Rogers. With Marvel near bankruptcy, Image began licensing characters in their Heroes Reborn line. Retelling superheroes from (often) their origin stories. Perfect!

Captain America Comics #4

The first thing to notice is just how big it is. 68 pages! 45 (as the cover proudly displays) are Cap stories. Yep, stories. None of these 'arcs'. Not only did the tales finish in one issue but wrapped up in a few pages.

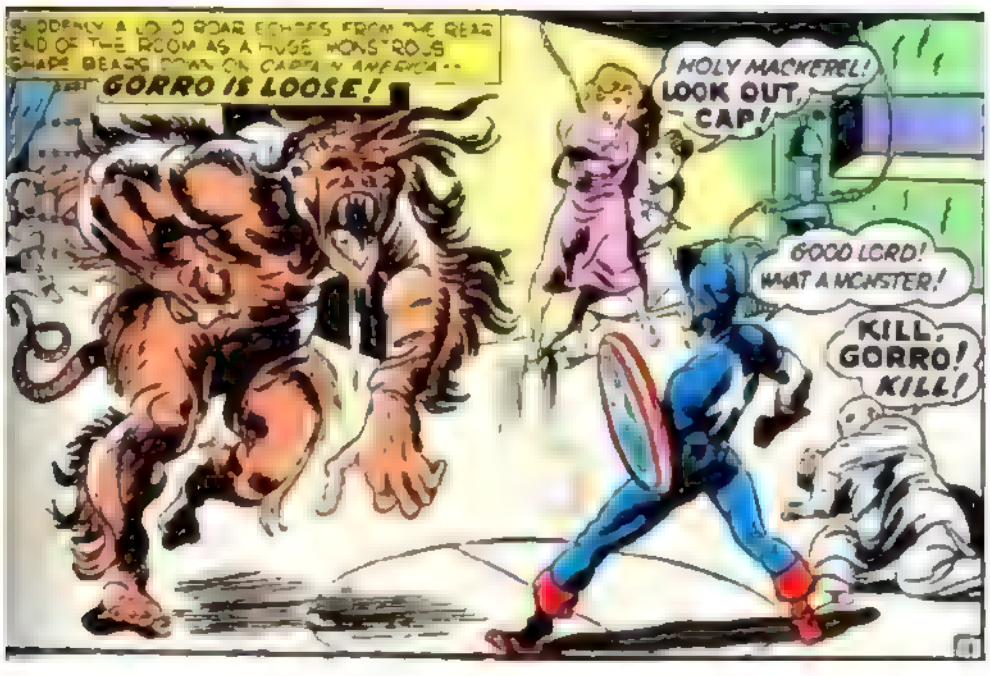
The art is garish, cartoonish and over the top. But we must remember, there was little for comic artists to base their construction on. It wasn't a storypaper, magazine or book. At the same time, it also didn't work as a newspaper comic strip does. Superman had only been released a couple of years earlier and The Shield (let's just say Cap was hugely influenced by that MLJ character) only months before. So, they're flying blind. See what works.

Okay, so for me, the art is not what I enjoy. I prefer the realism art of Neal Adams or John Buscema. However, it is absolutely full of dynamism. It's

impossible to take your eyes off this rollercoaster ride.

LET'S START CLEANING HOUSE
OOOOW!!
HERE'S WHERE YOU BREAK THE HIGH-JUMP RECORD
BUT BUCKY IS NOT OLE STINKER! HE BURNS OFF HIS BONDS ON THE HOT BRAND AND SEIZING THE WHITE HOT IRON, HE MAKES FOR THE BEGGAR LEADER
THE BEGGAR LEADER SPIES THE SIZZLING BRAND AND QUICKLY DRAWS A CONCEALED GUN FROM HIS SWEATER
YANKEE SWINE!
MEANWHILE, CAPTAIN AMERICA IS MENACED BY ANOTHER BEGGAR WIELDING A KNIFE

The lead story is the Unholy Legion, where Cap takes on American Nazis. Bear in mind, this was 1941 and the USA was a few years off from committing to war with Hitler. Bucky infiltrates a gang of far-right traitors, ably assisted by Cap. The action crosses from the streets to the ocean before taking on the aforementioned Legion. It's terrific breathless stuff.



Any kid at the time would be enthralled. However, there's little 'character' to the heroes. Steve Rogers and Bucky Barnes are just alter-egos borne as necessities to hide their real superhero identities. Quite the opposite of the later Fantastic Four or Spider-Man that heralded the Marvel Age of Comics.

The 'monster' theme continues in the last story (which, strangely, is also the cover story) in the Horror Hospital. It's another cracking all-action story, as is the counterfeiters of the Fake Money Fiends. The other tale is Cap & Bucky (he appears at least as much as Cap in this comic) against Ivan the

Terrible. Did he steal Kang's time machine? Nope, just a Bucky Barnes dream.

Captain America (Heroes Reborn #4)

Overall, a comic for kids. Each tale requires next to no knowledge of the characters. The art is wild and exhilarating, even if not to my tastes. It does not surprise me at all how popular this was in the Forties. I've read enough to know Simon and Kirby were ahead of so many creators in this era.

Absolutely mesmerizing, all-action from the pens of some of the most important creators in comics.

History suggests that Heroes Reborn was a critical failure and best forgotten. I would not be so brutal. There were some interesting ideas that later came out more successfully in the Ultimate Universe.

I ADMIT THAT TIMES CHANGE, AND PEOPLE MAY FEEL DIFFERENTLY THAN THEY ONCE DID.
BUT, THE BASIC CONCEPTS OF FREEDOM...
...THAT ALL MEN ARE CREATED EQUAL.
AND THE PURSUIT OF LIBERTY.
ALL BURN AS BRIGHTLY IN THE SOULS OF AMERICANS AS THEY EVER DID.

Let's tackle the artwork firstly. Rob Liefeld was one of the hottest properties around in 1997. It was over-the-top and cartoonish. Pretty similar to Cap of the Golden Age then, it would appear. Well, not for me. I was never a fan of Liefeld. There were not that many that agreed with me at the time, although I probably find myself on the right side of history now. What can I say? Maybe it's for you, but definitely not for me.

The storytelling is very different. Bucky is now a girl called Rikki, and the story is a throwback to the Silver Age 'Death of Bucky'. I've no idea if

Rikki dies in the next issue, as, unlike CA Comics, it's one part of a continuing arc. There's some reference to what happened previously, but it's basically a cliffhanger for the next issue. Written for the TPB as it were.

The Red Skull and Crossbones both appear. As with Liefeld's style, these are huge and unrealistic. I could not see Cap & Rikki taking on counterfeiters. The script is fine enough but the over-the-top action spoils it for me.

The Upshot

I am not the biggest fan of Golden Age comics (Plastic Man excepted) but I enjoyed Captain America Comics #4. The dynamism of the lead and the cover stories were fantastic. Ok, I could not read too many without pining for the Bronze Age but, at the same time, any kid would not be able to take their eyes off this non-stop action.

Captain America Comics #4 hands down beat CA: Heroes Reborn #4. They are written for different audiences. And I'm not Rob Liefeld's audience. Had Jeph Loeb had a different artist (although I acknowledge Liefeld also plotted), I may have enjoyed this more. But the art is so 'macho' that I struggle to get through this.

Verdict: Captain America Comics #4 wins the gold!

THIS DAY IN COMICS
May 1982

Just another month, I'm afraid!

2000 AD #262-266
Action Comics #531
The Aliens #2
All-Star Squadron #9
Alternate Existance #1
Amazing Heroes #11
The Amazing Spider-Man #228
Arak Son of Thunder #9
Archie #316
Archie... Archie Andrews, Where Are You? Comics Digest Magazine #22
Archie's Double Digest Quarterly Magazine #2
Archie's Girls Betty and Veronica #317
Archie's Jokebook Magazine #285
Archie's Pals 'n' Gals #158
Archie's TV Laugh-Out #85
The Avengers #219
Batman #347
The Best of DC #24
Betty and Me #128
Blueberry #7
The Brave and the Bold #186
Brothers of the Spear #18
Buck Rogers in the 25th Century #16
Captain America #269
Jughead with Archie Digest #50
Justice League of America #202
Ka-Zar the Savage #14
King Conan #10
Legion of Super-Heroes #287
Life with Archie #230
Marvel Fanfare #2
Marvel Super-Heroes #385
Marvel Tales #139
Marvel Team-Up #117
Marvel Two-In-One #87
Master of Kung Fu #112
Mendy and the Golem #5
Micronauts #41
Moon Knight #19
The New Adventures of Superboy #29
The New Teen Titans #19
The Occult Files of Doctor Spektor #25
Power Man and Iron Fist #81
Superman Family 218
ROM Spaceknight #30
The Saga of Swamp Thing #1
The Savage Sword Of Conan #76
Sgt. Rock #364
Space Family Robinson #59
The Spectacular Spider-Man #66
Star Wars #59
Superman #371
Thor #319
The Twilight Zone #92
Uncanny X-Men #157
The Unexpected #222
Unknown Soldier #263
Vampirella #105
Walt Disney's Comics and Stories #499
The Warlord #57
Weird War Tales #111
Wonder Woman #291
World's Finest Comics #279
Captain Carrot & His Amazing Zoo Crew! 3
Captain Victory and Galactic Rangers #4
Cerebus #38
Charlton Bullseye #7
Conan the Barbarian #134
Crazy Magazine #86
Creepy #137
Daredevil #182
Dazzler #15
DC Comics Presents #45
DC Special Blue Ribbon Digest #21
The Defenders #107
Dennis the Menace #7
Destroyer Duck #1
Detective Comics #514
Doctor Who Magazine #64
Donald Duck #240
Fantastic Four #242
Fantastic Four Roast
The Flash #309
G.I. Combat #241
Ghost Rider #68
Ghosts #112
Green Lantern #152
Grimm's Ghost Stories #59
Heavy Metal #62
House of Mystery #304
The Incredible Hulk #271
Iron Man #158
Jonah Hex #60
Pep Comics #385

Well, normally, I would fill up this space with all the great storylines of this month. However,…. there's not a lot happening! Daredevil grieves for Elektra. Satan is revealed to be Mephisto in Ghost Rider. Dredd in the Apocalypse War. And that's yer lot!

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